



Ridge View School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119050
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280449
Inspection dates 7 February 2006 to 7 February 2006
Reporting inspector Terry Elston AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special	School address	Cage Green Road
School category	Community special		Tonbridge
Age range of pupils	2 to 19		Kent TN10 4PT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01732 771384
Number on roll	88	Fax number	01732 770344
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Roy Brazier
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Jacqui Tovey

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
2 to 19	7 February 2006 - 7 February 2006	280449

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ridge View is a school for 87 pupils aged 2 to 19 with profound, severe and complex learning difficulties, serving a wide area of west and nearby London boroughs. Children's attainment on entry is very low. Of the current population, there are 7 looked after children. Around 5% of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Asian, and 3% speak English as an additional language. All pupils except 10 of the children in the Foundation Stage have statements of their special educational needs. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds.

The school has experienced considerable difficulty recently recruiting suitable teaching and senior staff and three posts are currently filled by temporary teachers. Recent reorganisation proposals mean that over the next five years the number of pupils is due to double.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ridge View is a satisfactory school. This evaluation differs from the school's view that its provision is good. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the head teacher and deputy, in their first year, have developed a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, some of the improvements they have made have yet to make a full impact on the quality of teaching and learning. A weakness in the leadership lies in the lack of coordinators for a few subjects. A major reason for this lies in the school's difficulties in recruiting staff.

Pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Children make a good start in the nursery and achieve well in all areas. Older pupils achieve well in their reading and number work but struggle when asked to do experiments in science. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and good in the nursery where lessons are lively and exciting. In the rest of the school, teachers are good at making lessons interesting and the work is challenging for all groups of pupils. In the sixth form, however, teachers give students too few opportunities to communicate, either by signs or speech, and this holds back their progress.

The good guidance and support offered keeps pupils healthy and safe. Pupils enjoy school and feel secure because of this. They like taking responsibility and are quick to offer help to others. The curriculum is satisfactory, but the range of courses arranged for students in the sixth form is inadequate. The partnership with parents is good and they support their children's learning well.

Although, overall, the school has not progressed well since the previous inspection, given the positive impact of the new leadership team the school is soundly placed to improve further. It currently provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The provision for students in the sixth form is satisfactory. They make steady progress as the result of satisfactory teaching. The relationships are good and students enjoy their work. They do well in their work in the 'Towards Independence' project but there are too few other courses to challenge the students and make the curriculum more exciting.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more effective leadership to the sixth form to rectify weaknesses in the curriculum and teachers' expectations of students' ability to communicate.
- Raise standards in science by providing more experimental work.
- Make the management more effective by appointing coordinators for all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils achieve satisfactorily. They make a good start in the nursery and achieve well in all areas. They make particularly fast progress in their personal, social and language skills. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils make satisfactory progress. However, pupils with difficulties and disabilities, such as autism, achieve well. They respond well to good teaching and make good progress in their academic, language, personal and social skills. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics and the school met nearly all its challenging targets last year. In science, achievement is unsatisfactory and pupils of all ages struggle with experimental work. The school has this as a main priority for development and early signs are that this work is improving.

In the sixth form, students make adequate progress. They do well in much of their work towards the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) but the school lacks enough courses of this type to make the best of students' skills. Their communication, by speaking or signing, progresses satisfactorily but students would make better progress if teachers asked more of them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Pupils make good progress in their personal development. By the time they leave the school, most have developed good levels of confidence and independence. Pupils are friendly, behave well and are quick to accept each other's differences and difficulties. They have good relationships with staff and one another. They enjoy lessons and are cheerful around the school. Most pupils attend well although a small minority have extended absences for illness.

Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They gain a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong and develop a good awareness of other cultures through activities such as a modern foreign language week. Pupils contribute satisfactorily to the community through charity fundraising and their good links with other schools. They have a good awareness of the need to keep healthy and take regular exercise. The School Council is a good example of how pupils gain an awareness of citizenship. Its recommendation that pupils have fruit at snack time instead of biscuits shows how pupils are developing into mature citizens. College courses, careers advice and visits are helping students in the sixth form develop a sound understanding of the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the nursery, the teaching is good and children learn quickly. Here, all adults place good emphasis on developing children's social skills and they soon learn the rules about, for example, how to behave and where to put their coats. They make rapid progress in their use and understanding of language because adults are good at explaining things very clearly. Elsewhere in the school, teachers plan lessons well so that pupils are stimulated by exciting methods and resources. For example, in a religious education lesson about Sikhism, the teacher had pupils dressed in Sikh turbans and shawls. They were very excited about this and showed great respect for the clothes. They learned a lot and were still talking about the lesson at playtime. Teachers' expectations of pupils are generally high, but more able pupils sometimes waste time when they finish work early and are left with little else to do. The teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills is good and pupils make good progress as a result. In science, however, the work in pupils' books over the year shows too little focus on experimentation and this has affected their progress. Recently, teachers have made improvements and pupils' work is significantly better.

Assessment of pupils' progress is good. Teachers' good knowledge of pupils, rigorous record keeping and the setting of challenging targets are all making good contributions to pupils' progress. The good links with parents contribute significantly to pupils' progress.

In the sixth form, the teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers are good at making learning fun and students respond well by working hard. Where the teaching has shortcomings, students are not challenged enough, especially in terms of the expectations for them to communicate their needs. This holds back their progress, both in speaking and signing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is good in the nursery because it provides children with a stimulating range of activities that meets their needs well. Elsewhere in the school, links between subjects are planned well and help pupils to understand the relevance of what they are learning. Provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory overall. The sound provision for drugs and sex education is supported well by the school nurse and visiting health professionals. A good range of activities to enrich the curriculum is provided both in school and the local community. Visits to London, overnight stays and participation in events such as inter-school sports help develop pupils' personal and social skills well.

Students in the sixth form are offered a satisfactory curriculum. There is a good focus on basic reading, number and information and communication technology skills and some good topics that prepare students for college placements and the world of work.

However, there are too few opportunities for them to undertake different courses that would broaden their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The care, guidance and support are good. Children in the nursery settle well, largely as a result of staff building good relationships with families before children start. Throughout the school, teachers have detailed knowledge of each pupil's learning, personal and medical needs and use this well to plan relevant work. Parents, carers and pupils are involved well in discussing future targets and assessing progress towards them. There are good procedures to ensure the health and safety of pupils with good attention given to risk assessments and child protection. Working relationships between the school and health, social and welfare professionals are good and contribute much to pupils' well-being.

Pupils are given good guidance to help them develop their personal and social skills. Break time and lunch time targets do a lot to help them understand how to behave and to get on well with others. Care and guidance for students in the sixth form, including advice on choices for careers and further education, are satisfactory and benefit from the school's effective links with colleges and careers advisers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy have done well in their first year and have quickly grasped a sound awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The targets and strategies in the school's improvement plan are linked clearly to raising pupils' levels of achievement, keeping them safe and preparing them for the future. Since the last inspection, there have been good improvements in the curriculum and the way the quality of teaching is evaluated. There are, however, still weaknesses in the provision for students in the sixth form. This area of the school has lacked effective direction in the past. The school has good plans to rectify the weaknesses and the headteacher has made a positive start by taking responsibility for the management of the provision.

The school is satisfactorily placed to improve further. The difficulties recruiting staff have led to some subjects such as design and technology, history and geography lacking a coordinator. While this is unsatisfactory, the school is making good progress filling vacancies and with the training of recently qualified teachers to take on these responsibilities. The school takes good account of the views of pupils and parents and uses the information well to make improvements.

The governing body makes a sound contribution to the leadership and management of the school. Governors keep themselves well informed about the provision through effective links with classes and subjects.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, I visited your school recently to find out how well you are doing. Thank you for making me feel so welcome and showing me your work. I enjoyed my day and really liked talking with you and finding out what you thought about your school. I especially liked tasting the food that you had cooked.

What impressed me most about the school

- You get on very well with the staff and behave very well.
- I was pleased that you enjoy the work and have fun in lessons.
- Your teachers look after you very well and keep you safe.
- The children in the nursery make a good start to school.
- Your headteacher knows how to improve the school still further.

What I have asked the school to do now

- Your teachers need to get you to do more experiments in science.
- The students in the sixth form need more courses to make their learning more interesting and better opportunities to speak in class.
- The school needs to make sure there is a teacher to lead and manage each subject.